

Folger Shakespeare Library: Mobile Library Proposal

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INTRODUCTION

Our team proposal focuses on the need to increase the use of traditional print reference collection, attendance at library programs and workshops, and increase customer count in order to build the library's relevance in the community. The Folger Shakespeare Library sits on Capitol Hill in Washington, D. C., and is home to the largest collection of Shakespeare materials in the world. The library opened in 1932, fully funded by Henry Clay Folger and his wife, Emily Jordan Folger. They wanted to create a memorial to Shakespeare in "a marble building which reads like a book, and whose placement testified to the hope that Washington, D. C., would become the nation's civic and cultural capital" (Folger Shakespeare Library, 2020a). We request to present our proposal to the Director of the Library, Dr. Michael Witmore. Our goal is to create a mobile library, or "Shakesparemobile," that will continue to provide basic loan and research services, while hosting various events that afford individuals the ability to connect virtually or in person, while the library is undergoing renovations.

The library's construction coupled with the current safety restrictions has hindered its ability to bring people together through workshops and programming. We recognize the need for human interaction especially in a time where people cannot be as social due to the pandemic. The Folger Shakespeare Library's mission is "to preserve and enhance [its] collection, make [the] collection accessible to scholars and others who can use it productively, and to advance understanding and appreciation of [William] Shakespeare's writings and culture of the early modern world" (Folger Shakespeare Library, 2020a). For this reason, we have articulated a plan to expand programs and events within our mobile library that will allow people the opportunity to come together and access the library's resources.

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At the same time, we want to continue the Folgers' dream to honor Shakespeare as articulated in the mission statement, by creating an outdoor venue that hosts theater performances and movies, while following all social distancing guidelines. Most of the public has been mandated to work remotely in order to meet the city-wide safety measures. Considering the results of a PEW research study, "just about half (49%) of Americans think it is 'very important' for libraries to provide free public meeting spaces" (PEW Research Center, 2013), we are proposing an outdoor coworking space with Wi-Fi service that will double in fulfilling a need for people to work outside of the home, and as a way to interact in a public meeting space while still providing limited access to the Folger collection onboard the mobile library.

Along with the meeting space, a *Memory Lab* service will be available on site to provide an experience of documenting family and community history as they relate to the arts through interviewing space, scanners, and computers or tablets. We are aware of the need for individuals to connect with their families, at least virtually. As part of the *Memory Lab* experience, we will be providing opportunities for patrons to make Zoom video conferencing services as one of many meaningful ways to collect family and community histories. In addition to providing virtual connectivity to our patrons, our mobile library will bring back the drive-in theater with features based on written works as well as romantic comedies that have been inspired by Shakespeare's plays. Shakespeare puppet shows will also be featured throughout the mobile library program for children to learn about the prolific English playwright. We believe that our mobile library will bring more human connection and interaction safely, in a fun and responsible way while keeping the Folger's presence in Washington, D. C. still relevant during the renovation.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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Mobile Library

Historically, bookmobiles and traveling branches were successful in contributing to the outreach efforts of library services. They essentially brought the library to the people and were able to deliver knowledge, awareness, and literature to many underserved communities. For instance, after the Great Depression, Los Angeles was successful in expanding the use of bookmobiles or traveling branches due to the low cost of providing materials and services, which allowed the opportunity to “expand service to a larger geographic area” (Sanford, 2018). Furthermore, in a more recent article, bookmobiles are able to provide, “high-speed Internet access and other technological services to populations that might otherwise have limited access” and “that bookmobiles are growing and changing with new developments in technology and not despite them” (American Library Association Tech Force, 2020).

A mobile library will provide the opportunity to safely gather, connect with others, and bring the services of the Folger Shakespeare Library to the surrounding communities. As construction of the building renovation project will conclude in the year 2022 (Folger Shakespeare Library, 2020b), this project proposal will provide ample marketing opportunities to promote the library through the social media platforms already established by the Folger at little or no cost.

Coworking Space

While the Folger is being renovated and we continue to face a global pandemic, changing work environments and classrooms has inspired us to provide a coworking space that fosters the library’s mission of transforming education and driving discovery. Librarians will be available to assist in various academic areas, particularly to writers and artists, and remain committed to the library’s mission, by continuing to support Shakespeare’s work. Furthermore, we will continue

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to engage with our patrons “through fellowships, seminars, publications, lectures, and partnerships, [to] advance the study of Shakespeare and his world” (Folger Shakespeare Library, 2020a). Services provided will include extended Wi-Fi, a safe outdoor working space, connection with others, and a suitable public space for patrons to learn more about the Folger’s programs and their local communities. The mobile working spaces will include workstations equipped with computers and access to on-line meeting platforms such as Zoom or Skype. In addition, we will provide training and writing workshops, accessibility to virtual programs, employment and business resources, and the option to access research databases or special collections.

According to Census Bureau data, 41.6% of the Washington, D.C. population hold a graduate or professional degree and 41% reported earnings of \$75,000 or higher. Based on this dataset, we can deduce that this population may not be in need of traditional library services. However, these statistics help further the necessity for a coworking space. “Instead of spending hours in[side] restaurants, libraries, and cafes, people without fast internet access at home are sitting in [parking] lots near schools, libraries, and stores” (Kang, 2020). This free service would allow working individuals the flexibility and space to work, study, or “hang out.” Furthermore, according to the Census Bureau, 51% of the Washington, D. C. population has never married, while 36% is separated. As part of our effort to bring more people to the library, coworking spaces can provide a great way to meet new people, make friends, and perhaps meet their next partner.

Pew Research Center reports that people are requesting that libraries provide more public meeting spaces. By delivering a coworking space, the mobile library will be fulfilling a need, which can double as both a public meeting and coworking space. These spaces can be placed in

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an area separate from the library's shelves to allow placement for a snack shop or coffee cart which will be ideal if placed next to the area as this will attract more patrons, allow them to stay longer, and generate more revenue for the library. The coworking space will be located next to the mobile library, outside under trees, but close enough to allow easy access to the library's available collection so researchers can continue their work.

Memory Lab Service

In an effort to make its collection of primary sources a part of the community, rather than apart from the community, the Folger Shakespeare Library is introducing an oral history and documentation initiative to collect stories from its patrons. The objective of the *Memory Lab*, and why it is so important now to encourage storytelling, is to inspire patrons and add to the library's impressive collection of literature and art by contributing their individual stories. Language, arts, and culture will be preserved through testimony. Community members will be given the toolkit to interview one another and record memories. Given the Folger's history of being a hub for collections related to the performing arts, the questionnaire will focus heavily on life experiences related to creating, exploring, and connecting with the arts. The *Memory Lab* will be a mobile resource with an interview booth, equipped with computer stations for photo scanning. Community members will be encouraged to share their life history, including segments such as poetry readings, monologue performances, or singing during their interview. The objective is to amplify the diverse voices of the Washington, D. C. community and position the Folger as a place where the community can turn to as a resource while making the community a resource for the library.

Primary source material such as personal testimony is an invaluable tool for researchers in any discipline. The *Memory Lab* will make the macro-micro; providing opportunity for people

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to record their family history and help future researchers understand American history, migration, and more. When the collection reaches 50 submissions, the staff will collaborate with the library's website development team to roll out a new portal within the Folger's website to highlight the exhibit *Stories Shared by the Community*. The website, plus social media advertising, will allow for the community to see the impact of storytelling firsthand, and this will undoubtedly amplify the number of people who will contribute to this innovative project.

Costs associated with the project include the need for a recording booth, scanners, computers, and personnel. One to two library staff members will be needed to operate the *Memory Lab* and assist users with project details to get them acclimated in using the hardware. There is ample opportunity to engage community volunteers from the docent roster to assist with the personnel needs for this project. In addition, a project manager will need to organize the ingestion of the metadata and work with an archivist to make the community stories accessible once they have been taken at the mobile station. The resources available at the *Memory Lab* have the potential of being modified to allow for remote submissions of testimony, photos, and documents, growing the potential pool of preserved memories.

Drive-In Theater

Our concept for a drive-in theater will connect with movies that are influenced or inspired by the works of William Shakespeare. This outdoors experience will bring patrons in to enjoy a movie hosted by our mobile library and will invite participants to bring family or friends to enjoy a picnic while watching a movie. Children will have the opportunity to participate in a craft activity in conjunction with the themed presentation. If participants prefer, they can easily access viewing the movie from the comfort of their automobile. Other activities can include dressing as your favorite character, intermissions with Shakespeare Trivia, including giveaways and

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impromptu reenactments of a sonnet or a scene from a movie or stage production. Patrons will also be welcomed to arrive early or stay after the movie to check out books in the mobile library. Library staff can also inform visitors of the ongoing research being done at the Folger as a way to educate them of the Folger's mission. Suggestions for movies will include but are not limited to: *The Lion King* (*Hamlet*); *West Side Story* (*Romeo & Juliet*); and *Gnomeo and Juliet* (*Romeo & Juliet*).

Shakespeare Puppet Theater

Our puppet theater will provide the platform of performing Shakespearean plays and recite poetry for young audiences to enjoy. Shakespeare wrote 39 plays and 154 sonnets throughout his lifetime. It is said that Shakespeare did not want his plays published, but rather that they be performed. Due to the lack of electricity, plays were often performed outdoors during the day, and the audience often participated in the performance (Crystal, 2012, p. 18). Our mobile library will bring this tradition back to Shakespeare's intention of fulfilling his wishes. In addition, this aligns with the library's mission of advancing "understanding and appreciation of Shakespeare's writings and the culture of the early modern world," and model what the Folger does as we create a place for people to "experience Shakespeare and his world" (Folger Shakespeare Library, 2020a).

Shakespeare For The Young modifies Shakespeare's plays and poetry in a way for young audiences to understand the storylines through puppets. This company has been a guest performer at the Folger in the past and can partner with our mobile library to entertain our audiences with their puppet shows. They have renditions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Tempest*, and *As You Like It*, which includes audience participation, giving children the opportunity to play musical instruments (Shakespeare For The Young, n.d.).

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After being entertained by Shakespeare For The Young, visitors can hop onboard the bookmobile to explore all of Shakespeare's other works. They will have the opportunity to logon to a computer station to examine a digital copy of the *First Folio* since the 82 copies the Folger owns (Grant, 2014, p. 76), along with other rarities, including Shakespeare forgeries such as the only known plagiarized copy of *Venus and Adonis* printed in 1593 (Grant, 2014, p. 80), will be in storage during renovation. Visitors will be informed by library staff that the original *First Folios*, and other Shakespearean treasures, will be back on display once the Folger reopens.

Social Media Marketing Plan

Under the well-established social media platforms utilized by the Folger, we will promote and develop a campaign that will include integrating Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, and YouTube. Our point of contact would include the Folger's Social Media and Communications Manager, Benjamin Lauer. His well-received and interactive episodes of Shakespeare Lightning Round, exhibits his ability to connect with viewers including building relationships and networking with library professionals. The video hosting website and app, YouTube, will be integrated to create a promotional video, mobile library playlist, livestream an event or spotlight video with a significant speaker. Linking the *FolgerLibrary* YouTube channel to other partners in our channel sidebar will establish and maintain ongoing partnerships with other libraries, theaters, and foundations. The YouTube channel app is easy to upload videos, and other free editing apps are available to edit, with no membership which can easily link via a Google account. Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter can be used to promote the library with shorter videos. Promotional posters or other event related materials can also be posted on Pinterest, which can be directly linked back to the library's website.

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We will plan contests, promote bookmobile locations, create educational related newsletters, and encourage patrons to participate in our *Memory Lab*. An example of a promotional event would include partnering with Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) and their Art in Transit Program. We would establish a collaboration with local volunteer artists to incorporate poetry and visual art integration into Shakespeare's works throughout the surrounding areas served by Metro. Shakespearean themed schedules and maps could route the public to our partnering libraries and museums, where we would host events and contests integrating and incorporating services provided by the Folger and corresponding partners.

Our partnership with the Folger's Communications Manager, Benjamin Lauer, will allow us to stay connected to the library's mission of expanding awareness and staying connected with the library. Overall, we believe that utilizing social media channels, promoting likes, shares, notification bells, and catchy, appealing hashtags is a fast and effective way to leverage and attract more patrons to the library.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Folger Shakespeare Library, shoulder to shoulder with local public institutions and places of public service, is in a position to reimagine how it can best serve its community during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Since its founding in 1932, the library has steadily built a brand for itself within the intellectually dense Washington, D. C. community. This next chapter of the Folger history will bring the library closer to its constituency more than ever before. Through a four-pronged plan, library patrons will be able to re-engage with the Folger staff and collections tethered to a bookmobile: mobile library collections, coworking space, *Memory Lab* service, and live programming. Simulating the traditional concepts of the public library model,

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where many projects and resources are made available to patrons, this proposal is ambitious in scope. One of the most celebrated champions of the public library, John Cotton Dana, wrote that the hierarchy of needs for a public library is to provide “happiness first, of public education next” (1899, p. 10).

Happiness, hand in hand with education, has the potential of being delivered through the use of a mobile library. The Folger can use the mobile library to extend its reach and enter into communities within Washington, D. C., that may have been disenfranchised and not incorporated in past outreach efforts. Implementing a plan for the mobile library would require an evaluation of different pockets of the community along with statistical data as a foundation, the Folger staff can determine how best to park the mobile library throughout the year. Schedules will be made available in advance through the library’s multiple streams of communication, including email newsletter, social media, and website. Transparency about intention will help rebuild the trust between the community and the library.

Similarly, reconnecting with the community will mean reengaging in-person. Coworking space will provide that opportunity. Conscious of public health guidelines, which will naturally change depending on the status of the pandemic, the use of outdoor space with strong internet connectivity free of charge will encourage patrons to come back to the Folger as a hub for working. An added incentive will be connecting the outdoor coworking space with a café that will not only generate revenue but also give patrons a reason to stay longer and sustain communal working. In the same way, the *Memory Lab* will lasso in community members who are interested in recording life history and making it available for future generations as a primary resource for research. The *Memory Lab*, much like the mobile library, will be a nonstationary resource. A soundproof booth, which can travel, will allow people to interview each other and

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computer scanning stations will give patrons the ability to preserve documents and photos at the highest archival quality standards.

Whereas the library has used its rich connection with Shakespeare in past programming, this will continue through in-person performances and screenings of film adaptations based on Shakespeare's work. Using the same apparatus of staff, performers, and vendors, there will be performances that will accommodate public health measures reflective of the pandemic. In-person library programming will roll out in phases, the first of which will be drive-in movie screenings, as it is most conducive to social-distancing and is a cost-efficient way to rekindle the relationship between the library and the community. The second phase will include puppet shows, an opportunity to engage with K-12 students who may be experiencing virtual learning fatigue that can be remedied with in-person learning through the arts. Both the film screening and the live performances are a continuation of the Folger tradition and the mobile element of it speaks to the library's ability to adapt and meet its patrons' needs by making itself more accessible.

The most important element of this four-pronged plan is to effectively market the mobile library, coworking space, *Memory Lab*, and live performances. The Folger has historically used the arts to transcend literal and figurative barriers. The outreach efforts to advertise the new and continued resources available to library patrons is essential to its success and scalability.

Draft Budget

One of the many new services we are planning to start until the library reopens in 2022 is a bookmobile which will include a coworking space, *Memory Lab*, drive-in movies, puppet shows, and a social media campaign to advertise and promote all the new services we are going to offer. This plan will allow patrons to still check out books and socialize with others while the

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library is under construction. Including a coffee cart in the coworking space will benefit the library as well. The coffee cart will be simple to set up once obtaining permits and zoning requirements. There are currently no coffeeshops in the near vicinity, which has the potential to draw more crowds toward the bookmobile. If all the required permits are obtained, then hiring, training, and funding for the baristas would be the next steps. We propose a minimum of two employees, which will cost approximately \$60,000 for their salaries combined (Office of Wage-Hour Compliance, n.d.). According to crimsoncup.com, it will cost approximately \$60,000 to get the coffee cart started (2019). The library will gain an influx in revenue making the program feasible.

The *Memory Lab* will use the repurposed computers from the library as well as other technology that is not currently being used. The portable recording booth will provide users with broadcast-quality audio hardware and soundproof recording space, estimated at \$55,000. Three stations for photo and document scanning will include archival-quality scanners attached to computers from the Folger's existing supply. By requesting the help of volunteers, the budget for daily staffing can be between \$200-\$1000.

The mobile library will cost \$280,000 in total. The library will have to make a one-time purchase of \$200,000 for the bus and maintenance will be around \$80,000 annually (Warburton, 2013). To supply outdoor Wi-Fi, it will cost \$220.27 for each extender (Delaney, 2017). For the drive-in theater, there will be an annual licensing fee of \$1,000 to cover an umbrella movie license. Based on a general amazon.com search, the drive-in movie will cost a total of \$350 with the projector at a cost of \$200 and an inflatable screen at \$150; both of these expenditures are a one-time only purchase and can be reused.

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Program	Item	Cost
Coworker Space	Coffee Cart Employees	\$60,000.00
Coworker Space	Coffee Cart Start-up	\$60,000.00
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Memory Lab	Sound Booth	\$55,00.00
Memory Lab	Scanner and computers	\$0.00
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Drive-In	License	\$1,000.00
Drive-In	Screen	\$150.00
Drive-In	Projector	\$200.00
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Bookmobile	Bus	\$200,000.00
Bookmobile	Maintenance	\$80,000.00
Bookmobile	Wi-fi Extenders	\$220.27

EVALUATION

All the provided services can be measured through assistance of the patrons. The social media campaign will help advertise the events going on at the library. We will also include Quick Response (QR) codes (Pulliam & Landry, 2010) with our systems to advertise. With QR codes we can see how many downloads and interactions with the library the community has had. Therefore, we can estimate and see how many people will attend the events. In addition to quantitative evaluation, there will be qualitative evaluation of this project carried out by surveys provided to both patrons and staff. Surveys will be easily accessible and encouraged when people attend any of the given services. Surveys will be encouraged by giving patrons a treat for filling them out. Examples of treats can be a free bookmark, a special movie showing just for patrons who fill out a survey, and we can give a voucher for a free small drink at the coffee bar in the coworking space. The survey will consist of questions regarding how the patrons feel about the mobile library services provided, and if they feel comfortable in the coworking space. We can also include questions as to whether the patrons liked the puppet theater and the drive-in movie. The survey can also include a list for future movie viewings and patrons can rank them in order of preference. The library can decide which movies are the most popular and show those

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movies first. The significance of evaluating this project is connected to the Folger's role as a leader among libraries in the United States, therefore, projects such as the aforementioned have the capability of being scaled and replicated in other communities.

Folger Shakespeare Library Survey

Mobile Library/ Coworking Space

Did you like the mobile library?

Was the mobile library easily accessible?

Is the coworking space comfortable? Would there be any additions added to this space?

Drive-In

Future Movie Suggestions for the drive-in

Rank them in the order of 1-7. (1 being the favorite and 7 being the least favorite)

- Little Women
- The Wizard of Oz
- The Lion King
- Breakfast at Tiffany's
- Forrest Gump
- Gnomeo and Juliet
- Warm Bodies

Other movie suggestions not listed

Puppet Show

Future Puppet Show suggestions

Rank them in order of 1-7. (1 being the favorite and 7 being the least favorite)

- Midsummer Magic
- The Tiniest Tempest
- Adventures in Arden

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_Playful Players and Mischief Makers

_Macbeth

_Hamlet

_Romeo and Juliet

_Anthony and Cleopatra

Other Puppet show suggestions

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